

# De From Barbados a to Panamá

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Melva Lowe de Goodin

# **De Barbados a Panamá**

## **From Barbados to Panama**

Melva Lowe de Goodin es profesora de inglés en Florida State University y la Universidad de Panamá.

Ha participado activamente en la Sociedad de Amigos del Museo AfroAntillano de Panamá (SAMAAP) desde su fundación en 1981.

A través de las actividades realizadas por la Sociedad, la autora ha encontrado la inspiración y los materiales necesarios para esta obra, basada en el entorno de la comunidad antillana recién llegada a Panamá cerca de 1909.

Tres jóvenes barbadienses llegan para encontrarse inmersos en una serie de eventos que reflejan con gran realismo las condiciones que existían en Panamá durante la construcción del Canal.

Sus esperanzas y anhelos reflejan los ingredientes humanos que motivan una serie de eventos, no exentos de humor y que son un documento valioso porque congela en el tiempo esa etapa vital, en la conformación de la identidad de una de las comunidades más importantes que forman el grupo humano diverso, que es la mezcla de la que se deriva la nacionalidad panameña.

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**De/From  
Barbados  
a/to  
Panamá**

**Melva Lowe de Goodin**



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Prof. Melva Lowe de Goodin

Dirección postal de la autora  
(Mailing address of the author)  
Prof. Melva Lowe de Goodin  
Apartado 1388, Panamá 9A,  
República de Panamá

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Agradezco al Sr. Bruce Quinn por dirigir mi esfuerzo inicial de esta obra presentada el 12 de agosto de 1985, y a la Profesora Adelaida Alphonse Jones por dirigir este último esfuerzo presentada el 23 de agosto de 1997. Agradezco a la Sociedad de Amigos del Museo Afroantillano de Panamá (SAMAAP) por patrocinar las dos producciones y a la Kellogg Foundation por patrocinar la producción de 1997. A todo el reparto de ambas producciones, la ficha técnica, y los bailadores, les doy sinceras felicitaciones y gracias.

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Gerardo Maloney y su equipo de Radio y Televisión Educativa Canal Once trabajaron árdamente en la grabación y el estreno de la obra por televisión durante la celebración en Panamá del "Congreso del Canal Interocéánico" a principios del mes de septiembre de 1997.

Todas las fotos que aparecen en esta edición son cortesía de la Comisión del Canal de Panamá. Estoy muy agradecida por el permiso otorgado, y por el trabajo realizado por Gritzko Aparicio en la edición de las mismas.

Finalmente, agradezco todo el apoyo que recibí de mi familia durante los momentos difíciles de la producción, especialmente el apoyo moral y espiritual de mi mamá, la Señora Lethie Lowe, y los sabios consejos de mi esposo, Orville K. Goodin.

**M. L. de G.**



## INTRODUCCIÓN

Esta obra de teatro relata los esfuerzos de Manuelita, una joven de escuela secundaria, en escribir una composición sobre las experiencias de sus bisabuelos Samuel y Leah cuando inmigraron a Panamá para la construcción del Canal interoceánico por los norteamericanos.

La mayor parte de la obra está escrita en el inglés antillano, para mantener una fidelidad histórica a la realidad lingüística del grupo antillano en Panamá alrededor del año 1909. Las escenas contemporáneas de Manuelita con su familia y en el salón de clases se llevan acabo en español.

En la presentación de la obra en el Plaza Paitilla Inn hubo dos tarimas: una tarima se utilizó para el salón de clases y la otra tarima para las otras escenas. Sin embargo, en futuras presentaciones de la obra, productores o directores pueden optar por adaptar la obra a uno de los dos idiomas, dependiendo de los actores y del público.

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## INTRODUCTION

This play tells the story of the high school student Manuelita as she writes an essay about the experiences of her greatgrandparents, Samuel and Leah, who came to Panama as West Indian immigrants during the construction of the Panama Canal by the United States.

Most of the play is written in the dialect of English as spoken by the West Indian immigrants around the year 1909. This language is used to maintain the historic authenticity of the characters and to record the linguistic features of a dialect that is rapidly changing. The contemporary scenes with Manuelita at home and at school are in Spanish, which is the first language of most West Indian descendants in Panama in the latter part of the twentieth century.

In the 1997 dramatic presentation of this play, there were two stages: one was used for the classroom scenes with Manuelita, and the other was used for all the other scenes. Nevertheless, in future stage productions, the producers or directors may choose to adapt the play to one of the languages, depending on the actors and the public.

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# FROM BARBADOS TO PANAMA

By Melva Lowe de Goodin

**PRÓLOGO:** Es el año 1980 en la casa de una familia panameña de descendencia afroantillana. Manuelita, una alumna de escuela secundaria, está escribiendo una composición sobre el Canal de Panamá, mientras su mamá hace los oficios de casa. Luego entra el papá con sus abuelos Samuel y Leah.

**MÚSICA:** "West Indian Man" de Ruben Blades  
"COLON MAN"

**SCENE I:** This scene takes place in Barbados in August 1909. Samuel, George and James are underemployed or unemployed. While reading the newspaper, they come across the recruitment ad for workers to build the Panama Canal.

**MUSIC:** Harry Belafonte's "Day-O, Day-O"

**SCENE II:** This scene takes place at Samuel's house in Barbados in 1909. He tells his mother that he and his friends George and James are going to Panama to work on the Canal. The three friends meet at Samuel's house to begin their trip.

**SCENE III:** Samuel, George, and James arrive in Panama on September 2, 1909. When they disembark in Colon, they are disappointed at what they see. They go to the Isthmian Canal Commission, where they are assigned housing and given jobs.

**SCENE IV:** It is the first day of work. Samuel is a part of the excavating team and George is a part of the fumigating

brigade. James is assigned to the dynamite crew and suffers an accident the first day of work.

**SCENE V:** Ésta es una escena contemporánea de 1980. Manuelita está en su salón de clases leyendo su composición que narra los sucesos de las escenas en inglés. El profesor/la profesora hace comentarios sobre los acontecimientos.

**SCENE VI:** This scene takes place in the hospital, where a doctor and nurse are attending to James. He later dies because of the doctor's negligence.

**SCENE VII:** El escenario vuelve a Manuelita en su salón de clases con su profesor(a) narrando las experiencias que tuvieron Samuel y George con Madame Kalalú.

**SCENE VIII:** This scene takes place on a Sunday at the Club House. Samuel and George have just come from church and are sitting at a table; then they have an encounter with Madame Kalalu, the Obeah Woman, who tells them their fortunes.

**SCENE IX:** Manuelita lee la parte de su composición que relata el noviazgo de su bisabuelo Samuel y su bisabuela Leah. También cuenta las experiencias de George con la prostituta Matilda.

**SCENE X:** This scene takes place at the living quarters of Leah and the prostitute, Matilda. Samuel asks Leah to marry him, and George has an unpleasant experience with Matilde.

**MUSIC:** Harry Belafonte's "Matilda"



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**SCENE XI:** Esta escena regresa al salón de clases donde Manuelita relata los incidentes en el correo y el comisariato.

**SCENE XII:** This scene takes place at the post office where George gets a letter from his mother telling him of the birth of his sister Daphne's child.

**SCENE XIII:** This scene takes place at the Commissary where they encounter problems with the Gold Roll/Silver Roll system.

**SCENE XIV:** Manuelita relata los acontecimientos que enristecieron a la boda de sus bisabuelos. Termina de leer su composición en la clase, y recibe felicitaciones de su profesor(a) y compañeros.

**SCENE XV:** This is the wedding reception for Leah and Samuel, which is transformed into a mourning party as they learn of George's death.

**MUSIC:** Bob Marley's "No Woman No Cry"

**EPÍLOGO:** Manuelita les informa a sus padres del éxito que tuvo con su composición y que su profesor(a) quiere escribir una obra de teatro sobre las experiencias de Samuel y Leah.

**MUSIC:** Ruben Blades' "West Indian Man"

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## REPARTO (CAST OF CHARACTERS)

Manuelita Martin, estudiante de secundaria  
(secondary school student)

Violeta de Martin, mamá de Manuelita  
(Manuelita's mother)

Jorge Martin, papá de Manuelita  
(Manuelita's father)

Leah Martin (anciana) bisabuela de Manuelita  
(Manuelita's greatgrandmother)

Samuel Martin (anciano) bisabuelo de Manuelita  
(Manuelita's greatgrandfather)

Profesor(a) de Manuelita (hombre o mujer)  
(Manuelita's teacher—male or female)

Samuel Martin, joven de Barbados  
(young man from Barbados)

George Brown, amigo de Samuel de Barbados  
(Samuel's friend from Barbados)

James Smith, amigo de Samuel de Barbados  
(Samuel's friend from Barbados)

Mamá de Samuel Martin  
(Samuel Martin's mother)

Hannah, joven barbadiense novia de George Brown  
(Barbadian fiancée of George Brown)

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Hombre blanco norteamericano—oficinista y doctor  
(White American male—office clerk and doctor)

Mujer blanca norteamericana—enfermera y Miss Amy

Leah, joven lavandera de Martinique, novia de Samuel  
(young washerwoman from Martinique who becomes  
Samuel Martin's bride)

Matilda, la prostituta  
(the prostitute)

Madame Kalalú, vidente antillana  
(West Indian obeah woman)

Vendedor negro antillano en el comisariato  
(Black salesclerk at the Commissary)

Chucu, trabajador antillano que trae las noticias de la muerte  
de George  
(West Indian canal worker who brings the news of George's  
death.)

## PRÓLOGO

**ESCENARIO:** Manuelita, estudiante de escuela secundaria, está sentada en una mesa haciendo su tarea. Su mamá está planchando ropa o haciendo algún oficio doméstico.

**MANUELITA:** Mami, pronto se celebra otro aniversario del Canal de Panamá y tengo que entregar una composición sobre la historia de su construcción. No sé qué escribir...

**MAMA (VIOLETA):** En estos días estuve leyendo un artículo

en el periódico sobre los esfuerzos de los franceses en 1881 bajo la dirección del ingeniero Ferdinand DeLesseps, el que construyó el Canal de Suez.

**MANUELITA:** Dicen que la corrupción fue lo que causó el fracaso de esa compañía en 1889.

**MAMA(VIOLETA):** No solamente la corrupción. De acuerdo con ese artículo que leí, lo que más contribuyó a ese fracaso fueron las enfermedades como la fiebre amarilla y la malaria. Imagínate: se estima que miles y miles de hombres murieron en un período de ocho años.

**MANUELITA:** Y apuesto que la mayoría de esos muertos fueron obreros antillanos como el abuelo Samuel.

**MAMA (VIOLETA):** No lo dudes, el abuelo Samuel te puede contar muchos cuentos de lo que sucedió en la construcción del Canal americano. En esa obra los antillanos también morían como moscas.

**MANUELITA:** Yo sé que la mayoría de mis compañeros van a escribir sobre los americanos que dirigieron la obra, especialmente los ingenieros John Stevens y George Goethals porque pueden sacar información sobre ellos fácilmente de la Comisión del Canal. Pero yo quiero que mi composición sea diferente a todas las demás...Quiero escribir sobre algo que nunca he visto en los textos de historia y cívica... sobre los obreros antillanos como el abuelo Samuel...

**MAMA (VIOLETA):** Tú sabes algo, cuando yo estaba en la escuela, no se me ocurriría escribir de negros antillanos porque los maestros y profesores tenían esas actitudes tan



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racistas y se burlaban mucho de los antillanos. Nos llamaban “chombos” y a veces peores nombres. Por eso hay tantos antillanos que se disfrazaron de latinos.

SE ESCUCHA ALGUIEN TOCANDO LA PUERTA Y MANUELITA LA ABRE. SE ENCUENTRA CON SU PAPA. (EL ABUELO SAMUEL Y LA ABUELA LEAH ESTÁN CON ÉL, PERO ESTÁN ESCONDIDOS PARA SORPRENDER A LA MAMÁ)

**MANUELITA:** Hola, Papi.

**PAPA(JORGE):** Hola, Manuelita. ¿Dónde está tu mamá?

**MANUELITA:** En el cuarto planchando mi uniforme. Pero, Papá ¿por qué no entras?

**PAPA (JORGE):** Es que tengo una sorpresa para tu mamá.

**MANUELITA:** ¿Vas a llevarnos de viaje? ¿Por eso cargas esa maleta?

**MAMÁ(VIOLETA):** (LLEGA PARA VER LO QUE ESTÁ PASANDO) ¡Manuelita...Jorge! ¿Qué haces con esa maleta? ¿Por qué no entras?

**PAPA(JORGE):** Porque te tengo una sorpresa, mi amor. Quédate aquí. (DEJA LA MALETA Y REGRESA CON LOS DOS VIEJITOS.) Traigo a mis abuelos Samuel y Leah para pasar el fin de semana con nosotros.

**MAMÁ(VIOLETA):** (SE NOTA EN SU CARA QUE NO LE GUSTÓ LA SORPRESA, PERO TRATA DE DISIMU-

LAR SU DISGUSTO MIENTRAS LOS SALUDA Y LOS ABRAZA.

Hello Granny!! Hello Grandpa!!

**MANUELITA:** Hola Abuelita. ¡Abuelo, que pasó! Long time no see. (Habla el inglés con acento español.)

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** Hola mamita! Leah, look at how big this child getting—is a long time we ain't see she.

**ABUELA LEAH:** WOW! 'Tas grande ahora Manuelita. ¿En qué grado estás?(Habla español con fuerte acento antillano).

**MANUELITA:** "Año," Abuelita. Ahora estoy en quinto año de la escuela secundaria.

En inglés se dice "eleventh grade," right? Pero en español se dice grado solamente en la escuela primaria.

**ABUELA LEAH:** I will never get this Spanish right. El otro día vinieron tus primos con tu tía Ruth y ninguno de esos muchachos entendía ni una palabra en inglés. Si viera como tu abuelo y yo machacamos el español para hablar con ellos. What a thing, eh, Sam?

**MAMA (VIOLETA):** Por eso vamos a matricular a Manuelita en un curso especial de inglés durante el verano o mandarla a su tío Bob a pasar sus vacaciones en Brooklyn.

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** Te acuerdas Leah cuando tú y yo hablábamos con Jorge en inglés cuando era joven, él nos decía "No, no! Somos panameños. Tenemos que hablar español".

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**ABUELA LEAH:** Por eso nunca podía pasar los exámenes para trabajar en la Zona. Estuviera ganando mucha plata hoy en día como tu hermano Jaime. He just buy another new car for his wife.

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** There was a time when the boy didn't even want us to say we was from the islands. Como que tenía pena de decir que era de ascendencia antillana.

**MANUELITA:** Casualmente, Abuelo, mi mamá y yo estábamos hablando precisamente de éso en el momento que ustedes aparecieron. Tengo que escribir una composición para el aniversario del Canal de Panamá y tengo una idea. Voy a escribir sobre las experiencias de ustedes cuando llegaron a Panamá para participar en la construcción del Canal.

**MAMÁ(VIOLETA):** Pero primero, deja a tus abuelos descansar un rato. ¿Quieren comer algo?

**PAPÁ(JORGE):** Acabamos de comer. Los llevé a comer al Restaurante Antillano, donde se sirve un buen bacalao con arroz con coco y guandú.

**MAMÁ(VIOLETA):** ¿Y no trajiste nada para nosotras?

**PAPÁ (JORGE):** Si, mi amor. (Le enseña una botella.) Aquí te traigo una botella de esa famosa bebida fortificante—Sea Moss and Isinglass! Dejamos a Manuelita con los abuelos y vamos a la recámara!

(NOTA: Sea Moss and Isinglass es un ponche de algas marinas que los antillanos creen que tiene propiedades afrodisíacas.)  
**VIOLETA LO REGAÑA EN FORMA JOCOSA Y LOS DOS SALEN DEL ESCENARIO.**

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**MANUELITA ACOMODA A SUS BISABUELOS EN SILLAS O MECEDORAS CÓMODAS MIENTRAS TOMA NOTAS PARA SU COMPOSICIÓN.**

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** (Se pone en pose pensativa y empieza su relato.) Desde muy joven, siempre me acuerdo de la gente en Barbados hablando de Panamá y Colón. Yo me acuerdo que los hombres que habían viajado a Panamá regresaron a Barbados con dientes de oro y también hebillas de oro. Hablaban como si uno podía salir a recoger oro por las calles en Colón.

**ABUELA LEAH:** Era lo mismo en Martinica donde yo nací. La gente hablaba como si uno podía salir a la calle a recoger oro de las calles de Colón. Se acuerda Samuel de la canción "Colon Man."? **ELLOS TRATAN DE ACORDARSE DE LA LETRA Y LA ABUELA LEAH SE LEVANTA PARA CANTAR Y BAILAR.**

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

COLON MAN A-COME

ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR

COLON MAN A-COME

ONE, TWO THREE, FOUR

COLON MAN A-COME

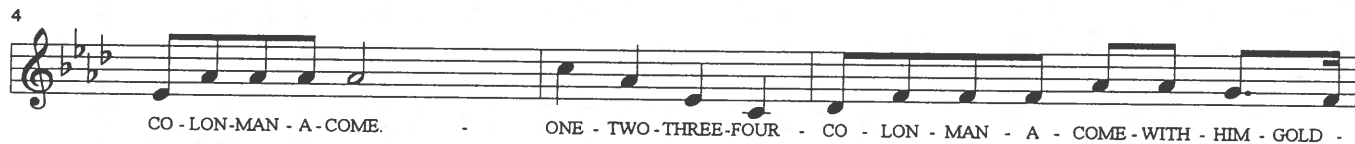
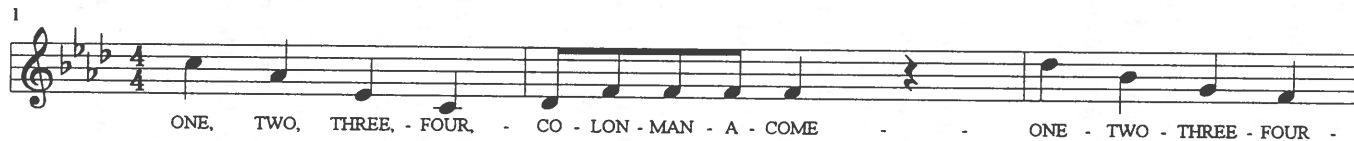
WITH HIM GOLD CHAIN

A-LICK ACROSS HIM BELLY

BUM, BUM!



# COLON MAN



**ABUELO SAMUEL:** La primera vez que se me ocurrió hacer el viaje a Panamá fue en 1909. Estuve con mis dos amigos—George Brown y James Smith—que en paz descansen. Estábamos tan aburridos porque no había trabajo ni dinero en Barbados. The sugar mills, that dem does call “azucareras” here —estaban despidiendo empleados diariamente. El precio del azúcar bajó y nadie conseguía trabajo en las fincas en Barbados. George, James, y yo la pasábamos en un pequeño kiosko del pueblo donde vivíamos.

George fue el primero en ver la noticia que apareció en los periódicos anunciando que se necesitaban hombres para trabajar en el Canal de Panamá. Él se iba a casar con una muchacha de plata—Hannah, se llamaba. Pero él quería venir y hacer su propia plata en Panamá antes de casarse. Sus padres no querían que él viniera, pero logró convencerlos.

**ABUELA LEAH:** Pero eran los padres de James los que más se opusieron a que viniera a Panamá. Él era hijo único y sus padres tenían plata así que él no tenía tantos problemas como tu abuelo Samuel en ese tiempo.

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** Pero él no iba a quedarse en Barbados si George y yo no estábamos. Así que a pesar de las protestas de sus padres, él decidió venirse con nosotros.

**ABUELA LEAH:** Lo que es más, me cuenta tu abuelo que él demoró en conseguir trabajo cuando llegó a Panamá because he was too choosy. He didn't want to do this, He didn't want to do that.

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** Lo triste es que poco después de conseguir trabajo, murió.

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**MANUELITA:** ¡Ay no! ¡ Qué lástima! ¡Qué golpe para los padres! Pero antes de continuar, Abuelito, déjame poner un poco de música. Creo que tengo un cassette de Harry Belafonte por ahí.

**ABUELO SAMUEL:** Está bien, Mamita. Eso me da chance para ir a hacer pipí. Come, Leah. Come help the old man, here.

**ABUELA LEAH:** Oh Lord, I forget to bring de bedpan. What a trouble I going have with you tonight.

LOS ABUELOS SALEN DEL ESCENARIO. MANUELITA PONE LA MÚSICA DE HARRY BELAFONTE, Y GRADUALMENTE SE OSCURECE EL ESCENARIO.

SALE UN GRUPO CON UNA COREOGRAFÍA DE LA MÚSICA. SE ENCIENDEN LAS LUCES Y EL GRUPO BAILA. MIENTRAS BAILAN, SE HACEN LOS CAMBIOS NECESARIOS PARA QUE EL ACTOR CAMBIE DE SU PAPEL COMO EL ABUELITO SAMUEL Y ASUME EL PAPEL DEL JOVEN SAMUEL EN BARBADOS.

## SCENE I

THIS SCENE IS A FLASHBACK TO BARBADOS IN AUGUST 1909. SAMUEL HAS BEEN WORKING HARD IN THE FIELDS. THE HARRY BELAFONTE SONG "DAY-O, DAY-O" IS HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND. JAMES AND GEORGE ARE SITTING AT THE TABLE WHERE THEY WERE PLAYING DOMINO. JAMES HAS A

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TOOTHPICK IN HIS MOUTH AND IS WEARING A HAT THAT ALMOST COVERS HIS FACE AS HE LEANS BACK ON HIS CHAIR. GEORGE IS READING THE NEWSPAPER. HE SEES AN ANNOUNCEMENT IN THE PAPERS CALLING FOR MEN TO GO AND WORK ON THE PANAMA CANAL. HE CALLS HIS FRIEND SAMUEL TO READ IT. SAMUEL'S FATHER HAD DIED SUDDENLY, AND HIS MOTHER HAS FIVE CHILDREN, SO SAMUEL HAS TO WORK HARD TO PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE.

**GEORGE:** Hey, man! Look what it says here. "American company is contracting men to go to work on the construction of the Panama Canal. The boat leaves Barbados on August 20. The company will pay transportation to Panama. Good Salary. For more information, come to Panama Canal Office in Bridgetown."

**JAMES:** Dah is news to you? Look how long dem been contracting men to go and bury dem in Panama. Better stay here in Barbados without a job than to go and dead in Panama.

**GEORGE:** You can say that because you father still making good money. But me and Samuel fed up with the situation in Barbados. Hey Samuel. Come here, Man. (HE CALLS TO SAMUEL WHO IS WORKING IN THE FIELDS).

**SAMUEL:** (SAMUEL COMES FROM WORKING IN THE FIELDS WITH HIS MACHETE AND WORK CLOTHES. HE WIPES THE SWEAT FROM HIS FOREHEAD) What's happening? The sun really hot out there.

**GEORGE:** Remember the other day we was talking about going to Panama to work on the Canal? Look at this

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announcement. The passage is free, and the boat leaving in two days!

**SAMUEL:** (GRABS THE PAPER AND READS FOR HIMSELF): Good salary. Let we go down and sign up, Man.

**JAMES:** Wait! Why we don't go to England. I don't hear 'bout Bajan people dying too much in England?

**GEORGE:** England? Look man, talk sense. Who gwine pay the passage to England? I don't see anywhere in the papers where they say "Free passage to England."

**SAMUEL:** Don't pay James no mind. He is an only child and he family got money. He don't have no problem. We are the ones with the problems.

**JAMES:** That's not true. I too feel very frustrated here with nothing to do, but imagine the problem I going have at home if I say I going to Panama.

**SAMUEL:** That's too bad for you. I going home right now to tell the old lady that I make up my mind and I going to Panama. I know she goin' feel relieved if I promise that I going send back money for she and the children.

**GEORGE:** I think I going to do the same. Hannah want me and she to get married soon. She say she family goin' give us house and land, but I no want that. I want to mek my own money, otherwise Hannah will be de boss in the house. I don't want dat at all!

**JAMES:** Well, if the two of you going, I gwine too. I not staying back here in Barbados doing nothing. Is one big

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fight I know I going have with Mama and Daddy, but if "oonoo" gwine, I is gwine too.

**SAMUEL:** All ah we gwine have problems when we tell the folks the news. But we just have to put we foot down and say we giwne no matter what. The two of you go home and pack your grips. Let us meet by my house to go to Bridgetown.

## **SCENE II**

THE SCENE SHIFTS TO SAMUEL'S HOUSE. HE AND HIS MOTHER ARE SITTING EATING AROUND THE DINING TABLE. THE ATMOSPHERE IS SOMBER, AS IF THERE IS SOMETHING OMINOUS IN THE AIR.

**SAMUEL:** Ma, this cou-cou and flying fish taste good. Put some more here for me. (HE STRETCHES OUT HIS PLATE FOR SOME MORE FOOD.)

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** That's all the food, Son.

**SAMUEL:** What you telling me? After I work so hard in the field, I can't even get a decent meal when I come home?

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** And things look like they gwine get worse before they get better.

**SAMUEL:** What you mean by dat, Ma?

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** We soon have another mouth to feed. Daphne makin' a baby!  
(WEST INDIAN PRONUNCIATION "Bie-bí")

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**SAMUEL:** Daphne doing what? We having it so hard since Daddy dead, and before she go out and look fuh work she gone out to look fuh mek baby? What de hell wrong wid she? Who is the father?

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** She refuse to tell me who the father is, Samuel. I don't know what to do. All she say is that he ain't working and he mother and father gwine say the baby not his own.

**SAMUEL:** Look Ma. We can't continue like this. They looking for men to go to Panama to work on the Canal. They say they pay good money. A boat leaving Barbados in two days. I going to try my luck in Panama. I sure I can get a better job and send home money for you and the children every month.

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** But Samuel, I hear ah lot ah people does die in Panama every day. Suppose something happen to you...what I going do?

**SAMUEL:** Don't worry, Ma. I think everything is going to work out. Don't worry. Just keep praying for me, you hear?

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** When you leaving?

**SAMUEL:** I going pack me grip now. George and James are coming here to meet me now and we going to take the bus to the recruiting office in Bridgetown. They say the boat to Panama is leaving in a few days. We going to be on that boat, Ma.

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** I wish you didn't have to go, but

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maybe is for a good. If things bettah in Panama, I gwine just pick up these children and follow you.

**SAMUEL:** Don't worry; Ma. I going write, and I going send you money.

(THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND GEORGE BROWN AND HIS FIANCÉE HANNAH COME IN. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN HAVING AN ARGUMENT.)

**GEORGE:** Sam, tell this woman that we not planning to stay in Panama. I can't seem to get it in her head that all I is going to do is go there and make some money for us to get married.

**HANNAH:** (in tears) That is what Charles Thompson did tell him girlfriend Sara. And you know what happen? Charles stay in Panama and I hear him married to a Jamaican or Martinican girl and have a whole lot of children. Poor Sara! Up to now, she not married.

**SAMUEL:** Don't worry, Hannah. I going to see to it that George come back to marry you. Him just want to go and make some money so you can have a nice big wedding.

**HANNAH:** I don't care if we don't have a big wedding. Mama and Daddy say we can have part of them land and they will even help us to build a little house.

**GEORGE:** I ain't going to get married and live off your Mama and Daddy. I want to be a man in me own house.



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(HANNAH STARTS TO CRY AND SAMUEL'S MOTHER CONSOLES HER.)

**MA MARTIN:** Never mind, me chil'; I don't want Samuel to go to Panama either, but things so hard here that they don't got no future. All of we going just have to pray hard for them.

THERE IS ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND JAMES COMES IN LOOKING EXTREMELY SAD.

**SAMUEL:** What happen, Man? Is sad, you sad, or is scared you scared?

**JAMES:** Mummy and Daddy carry on so bad when I tell them that I is going to Panama with you all. Daddy say he will get Mistah Burke to give me a job. Mummy wouldn't stop crying. I had to promise that I would just go for a month and come back on the next boat.

**SAMUEL:** Look, just as we expected, we all having problems with we families. Hannah is here trying to convince George not to go. Mama don't want me to go either, but she is having things so hard, and now on top of everything, Daphne is making a baby...

GEORGE AND HANNAH: What!/? (JAMES HAS A GUILTY LOOK, WHICH NO ONE NOTICES.)

**GEORGE:** You kidding, Man! How you make that happen to your sister?

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**SAMUEL:** Since Daddy dead, I have to work from sunup to sundown. What time I going to have to watch them girl children?

**GEORGE:** Who is the father?

**MA MARTIN:** She refuse to tell me. All she say is that he not working and that he parents going say it ain't he own.

**JAMES:** (Who had had a guilty appearance on his face when they talked about Daphne's pregnancy, now covers his face with his hands and bursts out in tears.) I think I bettah stay home. I don't think I should go nowhere.

**MA MARTIN:** Come boys, let me pray with you. God is going to work things out for us. Don't worry, Hannah. Everything is going to be all right. (She gathers them all in a circle and they hold hands. As she prays, the lights go down gradually.)

Dear God, Our Heavenly Father,  
We are gathered here to say goodbye to  
Samuel, George, and James before they leave  
for Panama. Dear God, please grant them  
travelling mercies. Help them to get good  
jobs when they get to Panama. Help them to  
always remember their families here in  
Barbados. Bring them back safely to this  
island soon, Dear Father. For we ask it in  
the name of Jesus Christ, your son.

**Amen.**

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## SCENE III

GEORGE, SAMUEL, AND JAMES HAVE JUST DISEMBARKED FROM THE S.S. ANCON AND ARE WALKING WITH THEIR SUITCASES (THAT THEY CALL "GRIPS") TOWARDS THE OFFICE OF THE ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION TO FIND OUT ABOUT JOBS AND HOUSING.

**JAMES:** So this is the great Colon I hear suh much 'bout?

**GEORGE:** I can't believe it! Them say the streets full a gold, but the only thing I see here is MUD AND BUSH!

**SAMUEL:** The two of oonoo\* hush up oonoo mout'. We here already, so we just have to make the best of it.  
(\*OONOO IS THE SECOND PERSON PLURAL PRONOUN, MEANING "YOU" OR "YOU-ALL")

**JAMES:** Make the best of it? Man look at all these mosquitoes. (THEY WAVE THEIR FREE HANDS AND SWAT AT THE MOSQUITOES AND FLIES.)

**GEORGE:** Man, they want to eat me alive.

**SAMUEL:** O.K. O. K. We soon get there. I can see the sign up ahead say "ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION."

THEY ENTER THE OFFICES OF THE "ISTHMIAN CANAL COMMISSION" AND ARE APPROACHED BY A WHITE AMERICAN CLERK:

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**CLERK:** You fellows are just coming in off that boat, right?

**SAMUEL, GEORGE, AND JAMES:** Yes, Sah. (James is reluctant to say "Yes, Sah.")

**CLERK:** O. K. Come over here and sign your contract. We pay 10 cents an hour and if you work overtime you can make up to two dollars a day.

**JAMES:** That's all? Is better I did stay in Barbados.

**CLERK:** What did you say? We don't want any troublemakers here. If you don't like the pay you might as well get back on that boat and go back to Barbados right now.

**GEORGE:** Oh, no, no, Sah. He didn't say nothing. He is all right. He just a little bit young, you know.

**SAMUEL:** Don't worry, Sah. We going to see to it that he don't make no trouble. None at all.

**BOTH GEORGE AND SAMUEL PULL JAMES AND SUBJECT HIM TO THEIR CONTROL. JAMES IS NOT PLEASED WITH THE SITUATION.**

**CLERK:** Who is Samuel Martin?

**SAMUEL:** Me, Sah.

**CLERK:** Here is a shovel. You are going to form part of the excavation team. Be ready to work at 7:00 tomorrow morning. Next. Who is George Brown?

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**GEORGE:** Me, Sah.

**CLERK:** You are going to work on the fumigating team. You will carry this equipment on your back like this and you will go around and fumigate all the areas of the town, especially where there is stagnant water. (HE SHOWS GEORGE HOW TO USE THE FUMIGATING EQUIPMENT AND HOW TO PUT IT ON HIS BACK.)

**GEORGE:** Thank you, Sah.

**CLERK:** And you must be James Smith.

**JAMES:** Yes.

**CLERK:** Sir. Where I come from, black people say, "Yes, Sir" and "No, Sir."

**JAMES (HANGS HIS HEAD AND RELUCTANTLY ANSWERS):** "Yes, Sir."

**CLERK:** You are going to be a water boy. Here is the bucket...

**JAMES:** Water boy? Sir, you can't give me a bettah job? I went to school for eight years and I can read and write.

**CLERK:** Well, do you want to be part of the excavation team or the fumigating team?

**JAMES:** You don't have an office job you can give me? I can write real good.

**CLERK:** Office job. My, my, my. You are an uppity nigger.

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All the office jobs in this here parts is for white boys like me. Look. I am going to put you on the dynamite crew. Here is what you'll need. If you don't like the conditions here, you are free to go back to Barbados on the same boat next month. Here are the keys to your quarters. There are four to a room, so you can expect another roommate. Be ready to work by 7:00 tomorrow or you will lose your job. (GEORGE, SAMUEL, AND JAMES EXAMINE THE EQUIPMENT THEY ARE GIVEN. THE CLERK LEAVES THE OFFICE TO ATTEND TO OTHER MATTERS. SAMUEL AND GEORGE REPRIMAND JAMES FOR HIS ATTITUDE)

**SAMUEL:** What is the matter with you, Man? You going to make things bad for all of us.

**GEORGE:** I am disappointed in this place, too. But what we going do? The boat not going back to Barbados 'til next month.

**JAMES:** I really sorry now I did follow you guys. I's going back to Barbados as soon as I can get a boat out of here. You guys can stay if you want to. This is not for me at all, at all.



Escena típica de una calle durante la época.  
Typical street scene of the period.

## SCENE IV

IT IS THE FIRST DAY OF WORK. AS THE SCENE OPENS, SAMUEL AND GEORGE ARE TAKING A BREAK FROM THEIR ASSIGNED DUTIES. SOON THERE IS A LOUD EXPLOSION.

**GEORGE:** What the hell is that?

**SAMUEL:** Must be the dynamite crew.

(THERE IS AN UNCOMFORTABLE SILENCE.)

**GEORGE:** I wonder how James is doing.

**SAMUEL:** (AFTER AWHILE) You know something, George. I have a funny feeling in my belly. I does get this feeling when something bad happen.

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**GEORGE:** What you mean? You think something happen to James?

**SAMUEL:** I don't know, George, but I don't like this feeling. You stay here. If the bossman come looking for me, tell him I soon come back.

**GEORGE:** Lord, if anything happen to James, what we going tell he mother and father? Is the only child them got! (THEY BOTH GO TOWARDS A WINDOW.)

**SAMUEL:** Look at all those people over there, George. Is an accident, an accident!

**SAMUEL RUNS OFF STAGE AND LEAVES GEORGE IN A STATE OF NERVES.**

**GEORGE (KNEELS DOWN AND PRAYS):** Oh, God. No. Please. Don't make nothing happen to James. Anybody else, but James, my Lord. I promise you if you save his life I will even stop drinking rum for awhile.

**SAMUEL RETURNS SHAKING LIKE A LEAF.**

**SAMUEL:** George, James hurt real bad, but he don't dead. They just gone with him to the hospital. All the other men in the dynamite crew dead, though. I never see nothing so awful. You see a head here, a leg there and blood all over the place.

**GEORGE:** And James parents tell him he could only stay in Panama one month.



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SAMUEL AND GEORGE GRAB A HOLD OF EACH OTHER  
AND CRY AS THEY WALK OFF STAGE.

## SCENE V

MANUELITA ESTÁ EN SU SALON DE CLASE CONTANDO EL RELATO DE SU BISABUELO A SU PROFESOR(A) Y COMPAÑEROS. (MANUELITA IS IN HER CLASSROOM READING HER COMPOSITION TO HER TEACHER AND CLASSMATES.) SE ACABA DE RELATAR TODO LO SUCEDIDO HASTA LA MUERTE DE JAMES.

**PROFESOR(A):** ¡Estupendo trabajo, Manuelita! Lograste captar el interés de todos tus compañeros. ¡Que triste lo de la muerte de James! Esta composición tuya me ha abierto los ojos a todos los sufrimientos del grupo afroantillano en la construcción del Canal. Pero tengo una inquietud. Yo pensé que casi todos habían venido de Jamaica porque como en Panamá le decimos “jamaicanos” o “jamaiquinos” a todos los afroantillanos...

**MANUELITA:** Para el Canal Francés, la mayoría vino de Jamaica, pero para el Canal Americano, la gran mayoría fueron contratados de Barbados.

**PROFESOR(A):** Para la construcción del ferrocarril en 1850, también hubo una gran inmigración de las antillas, pero tengo entendido que la mayoría eran jamaicanos.

**ESTUDIANTE:** Profesora, en Panamá no hay jamaicanos ni barbadienses. Todos son “Chombos.”

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(RISA ENTRE LOS ALUMNOS DE LA CLASE)

**PROFESOR(A):** Hoy no vamos a tener tiempo de entrar en una polémica, pero en otra ocasión tenemos que hablar de lo que significa esa palabra “Chombo” porque hay personas que lo usan como cariño mientras que hay otros que lo usan como insulto.

(SUENA EL TIMBRE)



1906-158-G Ambulancia del Hospital de Ancón usada también para el correo.

Ancon Hospital ambulance was also used to deliver mail.

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## SCENE VI

THIS SCENE TAKES PLACE AT THE HOSPITAL. THERE IS THE SOUND OF THE BELL OF THE AMBULANCE. (SIRENS WERE NOT YET BEING USED.) JAMES IS BROUGHT IN ON A STRETCHER SCREAMING IN PAIN.

**JAMES:** (Crying in pain) Oh, Ohh. Don't let them cut off my hand. Don't let them cut off my foot.

**NURSE** (Comes running with some equipment in her hand): Be quiet. Be quiet. The doctor will be here soon.

**DOCTOR** (Walks in with an air of indifference): What do we have here, Nurse?

**JAMES:** (Screams out in pain) Wahhhh!

**NURSE:** There was an accident at one of the excavation sites. The dynamite went off before some of the men could get out of the area.

**JAMES:** (Continues to scream in pain.) Waah!!! Waah!!!

**DOCTOR:** (Still with an air of indifference) Anaesthesia, Nurse. We need to quiet him down.

**NURSE:** Yes, Doctor. (She hands him the anaesthesia.)

**JAMES:** Please, Doctah. Don't cut off my hand. Don't cut off my foot. (THE SHEETS ON WHICH HE IS LYING ARE COVERED WITH BLOOD.)

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**DOCTOR:** (Applies anaesthesia and knocks the patient out.)  
O. K. Nurse. This seems to be a real serious injury.

**NURSE:** The other ten men who were also carrying dynamite were killed instantly. He was lucky enough to survive.

**DOCTOR:** What do you mean lucky enough to survive, Nurse? Lucky for whom? Can't you see that his right arm and right leg will have to be amputated? (THEY BOTH EXAMINE THE INJURED BODY OF JAMES.)

**NURSE:** Yes, doctor. But at least he can survive without an arm and a leg.

**DOCTOR:** And what use will he be to the Isthmian Canal Commission with one arm and a leg, Nurse? He came here to dig a ditch. Can he dig a ditch with one arm and one leg, Nurse?

**NURSE:** I suppose not, Doctor. But maybe he'll be able to do some other kind of job.

**DOCTOR:** What will the taxpayers of the United States say when word gets around that we have one-armed and one-legged West Indian men on our payroll digging the Panama Canal?

**NURSE:** That may not go over too well, Doctor.

**DOCTOR:** Do you know there are thousands more Barbadians, Jamaicans, and other island people just dying to come over here to work on the Canal?

**NURSE:** That's what I'm told, Doctor.

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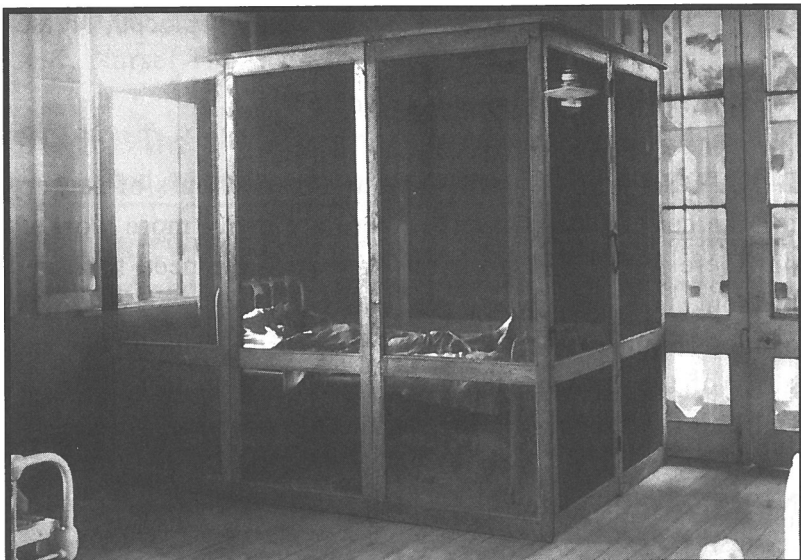
**DOCTOR:** This fellow here can be easily replaced, Nurse.

**NURSE:** What do you mean, Doctor?

**DOCTOR:** Nurse, it will take us several hours of surgery to take care of this patient. There are many more workers out there with far less serious injuries. We need to attend to them. We can't waste precious time fixing up men who cannot contribute to this Canal Enterprise. The power and glory of the United States is at stake. We can't afford to fail like the French. Bring me the next patient, Nurse.

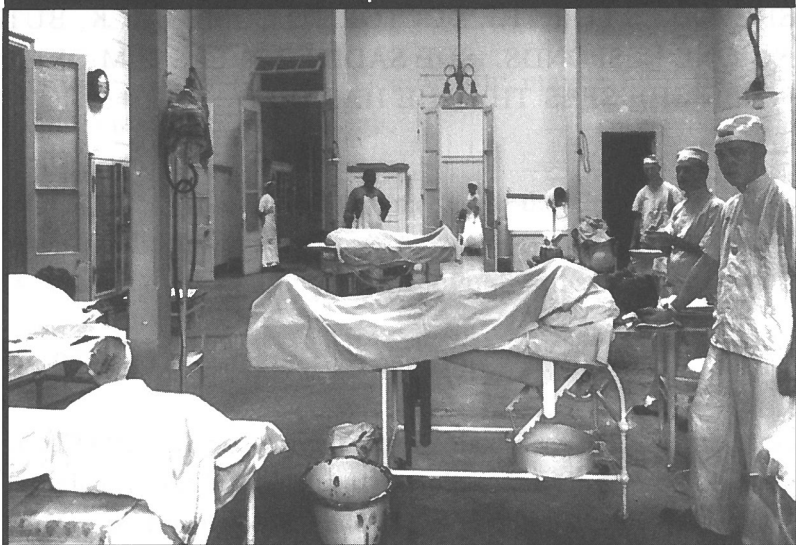
**NURSE:** Yes, Doctor.

(THE DOCTOR WALKS OFF WITH AN AIR OF INDIFFERENCE. SHORTLY AFTER THE DOCTOR LEAVES, THE NURSE REALIZES THAT JAMES IS DYING. SHE CALLS FOR THE DOCTOR TO COME BACK, BUT NO ONE RESPONDS. SHE SADLY COVERS HIM OVER WHEN SHE SEES THAT HE HAS DIED.)



**Yellow-fever patient inside a portable isolation cage at Ancon Hospital.**

**Paciente de fiebre amarilla en un cubículo aislado en el Hospital de Ancón.**



**Sala de cirugía en el Hospital de Ancón.**

**Operating room at Ancon Hospital.**

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## SCENE VII

EL ESCENARIO ES EL SALÓN DE CLASES DONDE MANUELITA CONTINÚA NARRANDO SU HISTORIA.

**PROFESOR(A):** Manuelita, me puse en el lugar de tu bisabuelo y su amigo. Con tantos desastres que sufrieron, yo creo que yo me hubiera regresado a mi isla.

**MANUELITA:** Pero en ese entonces, la situación económica y el transporte no eran tan fáciles.

Después del sepelio, mi abuelo Samuel y su amigo George se quedaron muy deprimidos. George, que tenía la tendencia a ser alcohólico, empezó a tomar mucho y pasar tiempo con prostitutas. Mi abuelo Samuel lo cuidaba mucho porque tenía temor de perder a otro amigo. Es que durante esa época en Panamá murieron muchos obreros antillanos.

**PROFESOR:** Pero yo siempre tenía entendido que el antillano fue el único grupo que resistió las enfermedades.

**MANUELITA:** Mi abuelo dice que ese es puro cuento. Miles y miles murieron y simplemente los reemplazaron con las masas de desempleados que existían en Las Antillas en esa época.

**PROFESOR(A):** Tu abuelo probablemente tiene razón, porque yo no creo que las estadísticas americanas en esos tiempos tomaron en cuenta todos los antillanos que murieron porque si las cifras de muertos eran muy altas, quizás el gobierno o el congreso de los Estados Unidos hubiera parado el proyecto.

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**MANUELITA:** Yo he aprendido mucho de esta investigación. Tengo toda esta riqueza histórica en mi familia, pero nunca la supe apreciar hasta ahora. Pero continuando...

(CONTINUA LEYENDO)

Después de la muerte de James, mi bisabuelo Samuel y su amigo George se sintieron muy deprimidos y desorientados. En una ocasión se sentían tan desesperados que fueron a ver a Madame Kalalú, que era como lo que a veces llamamos en Panamá "santera," alguien que predice el futuro y que te ofrece protección contra la mala suerte. Madame Kalalú le dijo a mi abuelo Samuel que las cosas iban a salir bien para él en Panamá. Le aconsejó casarse con la martiniqueña que le lavaba la ropa. Sin embargo, Madame Kalalú veía una sombra en el futuro de su amigo George, así que trató de venderle un resguardo de buena suerte, pero él no tenía suficiente dinero para comprarlo.

(SE APAGA LAS LUCES GRADUALMENTE Y LA ESCENA CAMBIA.)

## **SCENE VIII**

IT IS SUNDAY AND SAMUEL AND GEORGE HAVE JUST GOTTEN OUT OF CHURCH. SAMUEL IS CARRYING A BIBLE AND A HYMN BOOK. THEY WALK INTO THE CLUBHOUSE AND SIT AT A TABLE. GEORGE TAKES OUT A PINT OF LIQUOR FROM HIS JACKET AND TAKES A SWIG.



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**SAMUEL:** Man, yuh just come out of Church and you drinking rum already? You getting drunk every night since James dead.

**GEORGE:** Well if I going dead in this land I might as well dead happy.

**SAMUEL:** Who say you goin' dead, George? Cut that out, Man. It bad enough James gone. We just have to be careful. That's all. Just make sure you drink the quinine the Americans say you must drink.

(West Indian pronunciation: "kwi-néen". American pronunciation: "kwái-nain").

**GEORGE:** That bad-tasting stuff? No way.

**SAMUEL:** Look, Man. It taste bad, but you have to drink it. That's the only thing they say will protect you from all the fever that killing so much people here.

**GEORGE:** I don't know 'bout you, Man. But I want to go back to Barbados. They say a boat leaving next week.

**SAMUEL:** Go back to Barbados, to do what, Man? You know things gone to the dogs there. Mama write and say she and all the children coming here next month.

**GEORGE:** Oh my God! Where you going put them?

**SAMUEL:** I don't know. I so confused.

**GEORGE:** They say that lady over there is a four-eye woman name Madame Kalalú who does tell you things. Why we don't go and see her? Maybe she can tell we what to do.

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**SAMUEL:** We can't just come out a church, then go and see Obeah Woman??

**GEORGE:** Nothing wrong with that. Maybe God put the woman here to tell us things... We have to do something about we luck in this place, Sam. With yuh Mother and everybody coming, we luck have to get better.

**THEY WALK TOWARDS THE MYSTERIOUS-LOOKING WOMAN. THEY OFFER HER PAYMENT, WHICH SHE STICKS IN HER BOSOM.**

**MADAME KALALU:** And what can I do for these fine, Messieurs. (She has a French Creole accent).

**SAMUEL:** We come from Barbados. We just lose we friend James who come over with us. My mother and the rest of my family coming here next month. My friend George here want to go back to Barbados. What we must do?

**MADAME KALALÚ:** Did you drink you quinine (kwi-néen) today? You must drink it, you know. That's the only thing that's going to keep you from getting sick in this place.

**SAMUEL:** Yes, Ma'am. I drink it. But George here say he don't like it.

**MADAME KALALÚ:** George. George. (She has a singing enchanting tone.) You must drink you quinine (kwi-néen) every day. That's the only way you going live.

**GEORGE:** (Addresses Samuel in an angry tone.) This is

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what we come here and paying money to hear? Them does tell me this every day on the job.

**MADAME KALALÚ:** No, Georgie. Don't be impatient. (SHE HAS A SOOTHING, HYPNOTIC MANNER. SHE UNCOVERS HER CRYSTAL BALL AND DOES A SERIES OF MOVEMENTS AND RECITES SOME CHANTS TO PRODUCE AN AURA OF MAGIC. SHE LOOKS AT HER CRYSTAL BALL AND DANCES AROUND. SHE LOOKS INTO HER CRYSTAL BALL AND REACTS IN HAPPINESS. SHE LOOKS AGAIN AND REACTS IN FEAR.

**SAMUEL:** What do you see??

**GEORGE:** Yes, tell us, tell us. Is something bad going to happen to us? Should we go back to Barbados? Are we going to die in this land?

**MADAME KALALÚ (WITH HER HYPNOTIC CHARM):**

Don't worry, "Mon ami." Something good is going to happen. There is going to be a wedding and lots of children. But I see something dark in the ball. I'll have to take out my cards...

**GEORGE:** Take it out and tell me what you see.

**MADAME KALALÚ:** Oh, but the cards are more money, Monsieur.

**GEORGE:** Don't worry about the money. Here. (HE TAKES OUT MORE MONEY AND THROWS IT ON THE TABLE. SHE PICKS IT UP AND PUTS IT IN HER BUSOM AND

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CONTINUES TO DANCE AROUND AS SHE LAYS OUT HER CARDS.)

**MADAME KALALÚ:** Hmmmm... (SHE READS THE CARDS AND LOOKS SOMEWHAT DISTURBED. THEN SHE SEARCHES AND FINDS A GOOD LUCK CHARM.) Monsieur, you will have to wear this charm around your neck. It will cost you five dollars, but as long as you wear it, it will protect you.

**GEORGE:** (SEARCHES HIS POCKETS AND DISCOVERS HE DOES NOT HAVE ANY MORE MONEY) I don't have no more money now.

**SAMUEL:** I don't have no more either.

**MADAME KALALU:** Don't worry. I can put it up for you.

**GEORGE:** O. K. I will come back to get it on payday.

## SCENE IX

RETURN TO THE SCENE OF MANUELITA IN HER CLASSROOM WITH HER TEACHER AND CLASSMATES READING THE SECOND PART OF HER REPORT, WHICH SUMMARIZES WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE SUBSEQUENT SCENES. (ESTA ESCENA ES EN EL SALÓN DE CLASES CON MANUELITA, SU PROFESOR Y SUS COMPAÑEROS DE CLASE. ELLA CONTINÚA RELATANDO LOS SUCESOS DE LAS SIGUIENTES ESCENAS).

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**ALUMNO:** Profesor, queremos que Manuelita siga leyendo su novela sobre sus abuelos chombos. (MUCHA RISA DEL RESTO DE LA CLASE.)

**PROFESOR(A):** ¡Tengan mas repeto!

**MANUELITA:** No se preocupe, Profesor(a). A mi no me ofende la palabra, si simplemente significa alguien que viene de Las Antillas, porque no me avergüenzo de mis bisabuelos. Ahora, Muchacho, si usas esa palabra con otra intención negativa...allí si vamos a pelear!

**PROFESOR(A):** Ya basta. No quiero que se forme una polémica aquí. Pero es verdad que aquí en Panamá algunas personas usan la palabra con cariño, pero hay otras personas que lo usan como para menospreciar a los antillanos. Pero vamos, Manuelita, continúa con tu obra...

**MANUELITA:** Esta parte es un poco romántica pero cómica.

En esa época, mi bisabuelo Samuel llegó a conocer a mi bisabuela Leah, que había emigrado de Martinique y se dedicaba a lavar la ropa de los obreros. Mi bisabuelo empezó a enamorarla y un día llevó a su amigo George a conocerla. En el lugar donde Leah vivía había una prostituta de nombre Matilda. George salió con ella a pesar de las advertencias de mi bisabuela Leah.

Cuando mi bisabuelo Samuel estaba solo con Leah, él le propuso matrimonio y ella se puso contenta, pero no sabía si tomarlo en serio porque en ese entonces, los distintos grupos

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antillanos en Panamá, especialmente los barbadienses y los jamaicanos, mantenían ciertas reservas en cuanto a matrimonios mixtos. Es decir, los barbadienses querían casarse con barbadienses y los jamaicanos querían casarse con jamaicanos. Así que la pobre Leah no quería entusiasmarse demasiado por temor a que la familia no la aceptara, ya que ella era martiniqueña. Sin embargo, Samuel le aseguró que no habría problemas con su mamá. Es más, su mamá y sus hermanos pronto iban a salir de Barbados para venir a vivir en Panamá, así que pronto se van a conocer.

Después de un tiempo regresó George de su cita con Matilda muy desesperado porque la mujer le había robado toda la plata que él tenía reservado para mandar a su novia Hannah en Barbados. Cuando él se despertó no la encontró. Mi bisabuela Leah le dijo que lo mismo había sucedido con un jamaicano que salió con ella hacía unos meses atrás. Aparentemente, Matilde tenía familiares en Venezuela, así que cuando hacía estos robos, se iba a Venezuela por unas semanas y regresaba para empezar de nuevo!

## SCENE X

AS THE SCENE OPENS GEORGE AND SAMUEL ARE TALKING TO A WOMAN NAMED LEAH, WHO IS WASHING CLOTHES ON THE VERANDA OF HER HOUSE. ANOTHER WOMAN NAMED MATILDA, WHO LOOKS LIKE A PROSTITUTE IS FIXING HERSELF UP. AS THE MEN APPEAR, BOTH WOMEN GO TO GREET THEM.

**SAMUEL:** George. This is the woman I was telling you 'bout. She is from Martinique and she does wash and iron

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the clothes for all the men around here. She is a pretty little girl. I like her, so I does bring my clothes here all the time.

**GEORGE:** An who is that other one? She looks hot like pepper, mah Man.

**SAMUEL:** Careful, Man. That's Matilda. She hot like pepper for truth. I don't fool with her. (HE GOES OVER TO TAKE HIS CLOTHES TO LEAH, AND MATILDA APPROACHES GEORGE, WHO SEEMS ENCHANTED WITH HER.)

**MATILDA:** What's up, Mon Cheri?

**GEORGE:** Not much, my sweet little Sugar Pie!

**MATILDA** (SHE WALKS AROUND FLIRTING WITH GEORGE): Where is the action tonight?

**GEORGE:** Action? I ain't see no action since I leave Barbados. Not a damn thing to do in this place.

**MATILDA:** Come, Man. Let's go over to my place, and I'll show you some action.

**GEORGE:** Oui, Oui, Madame (GEORGE GLEEFULLY ANSWERS IN FRENCH AS HE AND SHE LEAVE THE STAGE EMBRACING EACH OTHER.)

**LEAH:** You better tell yuh friend to be careful. That woman would steal the milk out ah yuh coffee.

**SAMUEL:** He is a big man. He better know how to take care a he self.

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**LEAH:** Yes, but I watch her everyday. Some big men come here and she does leave them clean, clean, clean.

**SAMUEL:** Forget about George. Let's talk about you and me.

**LEAH:** You and me? Monsieur?

**SAMUEL:** You married? You have a man?

**LEAH:** Non, Monsieur. I not like Matilda. That's why I end up washing clothes all day long. The men here don't want to marry you. They only want you-know-what. All of them say they going back to Barbados or Jamaica to marry the girls they left behind there. So none of them want to get married. Sometimes I just feel like packing up me bags and going back to Martinique.

**SAMUEL:** You know I been coming around here a lot.

**LEAH:** Oui, Monsieur. Sometimes the clothes you bringing ain't even dirty.

**SAMUEL:** That's because I just want to see you.

**LEAH:** I like it when you come. All the men who come here just bring me their dirty clothes and they look around for Matilda. You are the only one who will sit and talk with me sometimes. (GEORGE TAKES HER HAND OUT OF THE WASHTUB AND PUTS HIS HAND AROUND HER AND WALKS ACROSS THE STAGE.)

**SAMUEL:** I been thinking. I would really like to have you



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as my woman, you know. Then you wouldn't have to wash nobody clothes but mine.

**LEAH:** What?? Don't give me no sweet words, Man. Do you think I am a fool? You Bajan men have to marry Bajan women. (Pronunciation: BEI-JAN). The same thing with the Jamaican men. They all say they is going back home to marry them Jamaican girlfriend. Which Bajan mother going to allow her son to marry a Martinican girl??

**SAMUEL:** No, Baby. My mother is not like that. As long as I love you, she will love you too. You going to see for yourself because she and the whole of my family coming over on the boat next month.

**LEAH:** You mean it?? You really mean you want to marry me??

**SAMUEL:** I really mean it. I been thinking about it for a long time. Will you marry me?

**LEAH:** (VERY HAPPY) Oui, Oui, Mon Cheri. I'll marry you!

**SAMUEL:** Let's go look for George and tell him. He will have to be the best man at our wedding. Now that James is gone, he is the only friend I have here in Panama.

(THEY EMBRACE AND KISS EACH OTHER. JUST AS THEY ARE ABOUT TO WALK OFF THE STAGE, GEORGE COMES RUNNING ON STAGE SHOUTING FOR SAMUEL.)

**GEORGE:** Sam, Sam. Guess what happen, Man?

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**SAMUEL:** What happen to you man? We was just going to look for you...

**GEORGE:** Matilda come back here?

**SAMUEL:** Matilda? No. I don't see her. Me and Leah sit down here all night and she don't come back here.

**GEORGE:** You know I drop asleep, and when I wake up she gone. And all my money gone too. (HE PULLS OUT HIS POCKETS TO SHOW HOW EMPTY THEY ARE.)

**SAMUEL:** What? You was walking around with all you money in your pocket?

**GEORGE:** Yes, because I was going to go over to the post office and mail it to Hannah. You know I always sending her money to save up for our wedding.

**LEAH:** I told you to warn you friend about that woman, Sam. She does do that all the time. Then she does get on a boat and go to Venezuela and stay until she think everybody forget her. I think she have a man and some family in Venezuela.

(SAMUEL PUTS HIS ARM AROUND GEORGE AND LEAH AND THEY SLOWLY WALK OFF STAGE. AS SOON AS THEY LEAVE THE STAGE, MATILDA APPEARS TRIUMPHANTLY COUNTING THE MONEY SHE STOLE FROM GEORGE, AS SHE DANCES TO THE CALYPSO "MATILDA" BY HARRY BELAFONTE)

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## SCENE XI

ESTA ESCENA REGRESA AL SALÓN DE CLASES DONDE MANUELITA CONTINÚA LEYENDO SU COMPOSICIÓN.

**MANUELITA:** De allí en adelante, mi abuelo Samuel decidió proteger más a su amigo George. Un día fueron a buscar su pago y después fueron al correo. Mi abuelo Samuel recibió una carta de su mamá comunicándole que su hermana Daphne había dado a luz y confesó que el papá del bebé era su amigo James. El bebé vino como una salvación a los padres de James que invitaron a Daphne a quedarse en Barbados viviendo con ellos. Tanto abuelo Samuel como su amigo George se sorprendieron de que James no les hubiera dicho nada.

Después se fueron al comisariato para comprar cosas para la boda. En ese entonces, había el famoso sistema del Gold Roll y Silver Roll. A los blancos le pagaban en monedas de oro y a los negros le pagaban en monedas de plata. Los sistemas de segregación racial del sur de los Estados Unidos se implantaron aquí. Habían servicios sanitarios para los del Gold Roll separados de los del Silver Roll. También habían fuentes de agua diferentes para los del Gold Roll y los del Silver Roll. En los trenes y vagones, los del Gold Roll tuvieron facilidades mas cómodas que los del Silver Roll. Hubo los supermercados—o como lo llamaron en esos días—comisariatos, para la gente del Silver Roll. Por supuesto, la mercancía en los comisariatos del Gold Roll era superior y más abundante que los del Silver Roll.

Mi bisabuelo Samuel casi se metió en problemas esa vez cuando él y George fueron al comisariato. El comisariato

del Silver Roll estaba cerrado y el del Gold Roll todavía estaba abierto proque una mujer blanca, Miss Amy, estaba exigiéndole un jamón de buena calidad al vendedor negro. Samuel y George se escondieron atrás con la intención de lograr que el vendedor ignorara las restricciones y les vendiera un jamón después de que hubiera terminado con Miss Amy. Cuando Miss Amy se volteó y los vió, se asustó y los acusó de tratar de robarla y de violarla. Samuel y George tuvieron que salir corriendo para no quedar presos.

## SCENE XII

THE SCENE OPENS WHEN SAMUEL AND GEORGE ARE JUST WALKING AWAY FROM THE PAY CAR, WHERE THEY HAVE JUST RECEIVED THEIR MONTH'S PAY.

**SAMUEL:** O. K. Now. First we going straight to the post office so that you can send home the money for Hannah. Then we can go to the Commissary and buy some things for the wedding.

**GEORGE:** You really going to marry that French Girl?

**SAMUEL:** Yeah, Man. I tired of this kind of life. I want to be able to go home to a woman after a hard day's work. I want to have somebody to cook my food, wash my clothes, and rub up my head when the night come.

**GEORGE:** But what you think you mother going say when she come? You know these Bajan women don't like no small island French Girl?

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**SAMUEL:** Look George. Things change. We is in Panama now. How many Bajan girls you see round the place? When Mama come she will see the situation here and she will understand. I not like you. I don't have nobody in Barbados waiting for me.

(THEY WALK OFF STAGE THROUGH A DOOR MARKED "POST OFFICE." AFTER A BRIEF MOMENT, THEY REAPPEAR AGAIN, AND SAMUEL IS OPENING A LETTER.)

**GEORGE:** Who your letter from, Man?

**SAMUEL:** Oh, is just a short letter from Ma to tell me that my sister Daphne have a baby boy. (HE CONTINUES TO READ THE LETTER.) What?!? George. Listen to this:

"Daphne finally confess that the father of the baby is your friend James who just dead. I went and tell James mother and father. They want Daphne and the baby to come and live with them. They real happy because they say the baby look just like James when he was a baby."

**GEORGE:** What a thing, eh Samuel?! And James didn't say a word to you. One day he did tell me something about having to go back to Barbados and make things right with somebody, but I didn't have no idea what he was talking 'bout.

**SAMUEL:** Well, that's two mouths less to feed when they come here. Let's go to the Commissary before it close.

---

## SCENE XIII

THEY RUSH OFF STAGE AND APPEAR AGAIN BEFORE THE "SILVER ROLL" AND "GOLD ROLL" COMMISSARY LINES. THE "SILVER ROLL" DOOR IS CLOSED, BUT THE "GOLD ROLL" DOOR IS OPEN BECAUSE THE BLACK CLERK IS ATTENDING TO A HARD-TO-PLEASE WHITE WOMAN.

**CLERK:** But Miss Amy, I have shown you all the hams we have for today.

**MISS AMY:** Are you sure you don't have any more hams in the back, Boy?

**CLERK:** No Ma'am. I show you all we got. Is time for the store to close.

**MISS AMY:** I have to get a ham today for the Wives Club meeting. But I don't like how these hams look. Too much fat.

(SAMUEL AND GEORGE ARE STANDING LOOKING ON)

**SAMUEL:** Let's wait 'til she gone and see if the clerk...he my friend...will sell us one of them hams. That would make Leah real happy to have ham for the wedding. I don't care if I have to use up all my commissary book to pay for it.

**GEORGE:** But this is the Gold Roll Commissary. You know only white people can buy here.

**SAMUEL:** I know. But sometimes them clerk can do things if you pass them a tip.

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**GEORGE:** You want to go and get the clerk in trouble now.

**SAMUEL:** Nah. He's a smart guy. He know what to do so they wouldn't find out. After all, we here working as hard as the white man in this place. Why they must have everything better than we? I tired of this "Gold Roll and Silver Roll" stuff.

**GEORGE:** That's why I tell you, I is going back to Barbados on that boat next month. Things are tough over there, but here, if you want to drink water, you have to look for the "Silver Roll" Fountain.

**SAMUEL:** You get on the train, you have to go in the "Silver Roll" car and most of the time you have to stand up. The white people car have nice seats and everybody is sitting down comfortable.

**MISS AMY TURNS AROUND AND SEES GEORGE AND SAMUEL HIDING CLOSE BY. SHE HEARS THEM WHISPERING, AND SHE LETS OUT A LOUD SCREAM.**

**MISS AMY:** Oh, My God. Look at those black men hiding back there. They must be waiting to rob me. Police! Call the police. What are those black men doing in the "Gold Roll" line? Police! They probably want to rape me! Police! Police!

**SAMUEL AND GEORGE REALIZE WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN AND THEY START TO RUN AS SOON AS THEY HEAR THE POLICEMAN'S WHISTLE. THE CLERK TAKES ADVANTAGE OF THE COMMOTION TO CLOSE THE DOOR OF THE COMMISSARY. MISS AMY IS LEFT ON STAGE AS SHE LAMENTS HOW DANGEROUS IT**

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IS FOR HER, A WHITE WOMAN, TO BE LIVING AMONG  
SO MANY OF THESE BLACK WEST INDIAN MEN.

## SCENE XIV

ESTA ESCENA REGRESA AL SALÓN DE CLASES DONDE  
MANUELITA LEE LA ÚLTIMA PARTE DE SU COMPO-  
SICIÓN.

**MANUELITA:** La boda de mis bisabuelos Samuel y Leah fue un acontecimiento grande en la comunidad. Había rica comida antillana y música de calypso y cuadrilla. Todos los vecinos vinieron para celebrar porque como había tan pocos acontecimientos sociales, todos se aprovecharon. La mamá y los hermanos de Samuel habían llegado de Barbados y la mamá de Samuel estaba muy contenta con su nuera.

La única preocupación que tuvo Samuel durante la celebración fue la ausencia de su amigo George. Al rato, aparece Chucu, un obrero antillano que vino a comunicarles que George había fallecido de una fiebre hacía dos días. Samuel siempre tenía que recordarle a George de tomar su dosis de quini-na porque no le gustaba. Pero como Samuel se ocupó de los preparativos de la boda, parece que George se descuidó y falleció rápidamente. Así que la celebración de la boda se transformó en llantos y lamentos por el fallecimiento de George. Mi bisabuelo Samuel estaba muy triste con esta noticia, pero aceptó el reto de lograr éxito aquí en Panamá, no solamente para sí mismo sino también para compensar la muerte de sus dos amigos, James y George.

Dios ha bendecido a él y a mi abuela Leah con una larga



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vida. ¡Imagínate que tienen más de noventa años y han estado casados por mas de 60 años!

**PROFESOR(A):** ¡Te felicito, Manuelita! ¡Hiciste un excelente trabajo! Tengo una idea. Vamos a escribir una obra de teatro basada en la vida de tus bisabuelos y la podremos presentar el otro año cuando se celebre otro aniversario del Canal. ¿Qué te parece?

**MANUELITA:** ¡Magnífico! ¡Me encanta la idea!

LA ESCENA TERMINA CON LOS COMPAÑEROS DEL SALÓN APLAUDIENDO LA PRESENTACIÓN DE MANUELITA.

## SCENE XV

IT IS THE WEDDING CELEBRATION OF LEAH AND SAMUEL. SAMUEL'S MOTHER AND THE REST OF THE FAMILY HAVE ARRIVED FROM BARBADOS AND SEEM VERY HAPPY ABOUT THE MARRIAGE. PEOPLE ARE WALKING AROUND WITH TRAYS SERVING DRINK AND FOOD. SAMUEL AND LEAH ARE DRESSED IN THEIR WEDDING ATTIRE GREETING EVERYONE. THEY SIT FOR AWHILE AND ENJOY THE ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDED. SAMUEL AND LEAH WALK AROUND AND GREET THEIR GUESTS, BUT SAMUEL'S MIND IS NOT AT EASE.

**SAMUEL:** I can't help wondering where George is.

**LEAH:** I was wondering about him too.

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**SAMUEL:** He was supposed to be my best man.

**LEAH:** I hope nothing happen to him.

**SAMUEL:** The last time I saw him was two days ago, and he say he wasn't feeling too well. Like he was having chills.

**LEAH:** I bet he did stop drinking the quinine. (She pronounces it "kwi-néen).

**SAMUEL:** You know how George is. I have to watch him everyday to make sure he drink it. But I was so busy with the wedding that I didn't get to talk to him for two days.

**LEAH:** Don't worry, Mon Cheri. Nothing is going to spoil our wedding day. George probably had to work overtime. You know how badly he wants to save up enough money to go back to Barbados to marry Hannah. Sometimes you can get up to twenty cents an hour when you work overtime, you know.

**SAMUEL:** I know, Leah. But it is just not like George to miss our wedding.

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER** (Calls everybody to make a toast to the newly weds.) Here, Here. Let's make a toast to my son Samuel and his pretty little bride Leah. She is not a Ba-jan girl, but I love her just the same and I know she is going to make him a good wife. And guess what?! I have a surprise for all of you all. Look who is here...Come Hannah (A CHEER GOES UP FROM THE GATHERING AS SHE ENTERS.)

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There goin' to be another wedding soon. George girlfriend Hannah come for them to get married!!

ALL THE PEOPLE LIFT THEIR GLASSES AND CHEER. HANNAH CIRCULATES AMONG THE PARTY HUGGING AND GREETING ALL THE PEOPLE SHE KNOWS. A GROUP OF FOUR COUPLES DANCE THE QUADRILLE. THEN THEY START TO PLAY LOUD CALYPSO MUSIC AND SOME PEOPLE START TO DANCE.

ALL OF A SUDDEN A YOUNG MAN NAMED CHUCU RUSHES ON STAGE LOOKING FOR SAMUEL.

**CHUCU:** Oh, excuse me, Is Samuel here?

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** Yes, he is. But who are you? What do you want? Were you invited to the wedding? Can't you see this is a wedding party?

**CHUCU:** Yes, and I'm sorry to barge in on you like this.

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** You could have at least put on some decent clothes.

**CHUCU:** I'm sorry. But this is an emergency. Just tell Sam that his friend Chucu want to talk to him.

**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** Chucu? I never hear Sam say he have no friend name Chucu.

**CHUCU:** Please call Sam, Ma'am. It's about his friend George...

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**SAMUEL'S MOTHER:** George? What happen to George? Just now Sam was wondering why he not here. Sam. Come quick.

(AT THAT MOMENT SAMUEL SEES CHUCU AND RUSHES OVER TO WHERE HE IS.)

**SAMUEL:** Hey, Chucu, What's up Man? What you doing here?

**CHUCU:** Sorry to interrupt your wedding like this, Man, but I got to talk to you. Is about George.

**SAMUEL:** George? What about George. Something happen to him? Talk quick, Man.

**CHUCU:** Yes, Man. I just coming from the hospital. He take in with a fever two days ago when him was working and they take him straight to the hospital. Yesterday when I didn't see him come to work, I got worried, so since today is my day off, I decided to go and look for him in the hospital. I got there just in time to see them wheeling him out on a stretcher. Them say him dead from this yellow fever sickness that killing everybody.

**SAMUEL:** (CRIES OUT) Oh, no. First it was James gone. Now George gone too. Hannah, Hannah, come quick! George dead, Hannah.

HANNAH LETS OUT A SCREAM AND PASSES OUT AND THEY HAVE TO TAKE HER OFF STAGE.

THE WEDDING PARTY TURNS INTO A MOURNING

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PARTY, EVERYONE LAMENTING THE DEATH OF GEORGE.

MUSIC FROM BOB MARLEY'S "NO WOMAN NO CRY" IS PLAYED IN THE BACKGROUND DURING THE COMMOTION.

AFTER AWHILE SAMUEL CALMS DOWN AND STARTS TO REFLECT. HE PACES BACK AND FORTH ON THE STAGE AS THE GUESTS WATCH HIM.

**SAMUEL:** James and George were my best friends. We knew each other from de time we were children in Barbados. We came to Panama to look for a better life. They never lived long enough to see their dreams come true. Today I thank God that I have lived long enough to pay the passage for my mother and my brothers and sister to come from Barbados to live with me here in Panama. Today I thank God that he has sent me Leah, this lovely Martinican woman that I married today. From now on we only going to think about making it here in Panama. No use dreaming about going back to Barbados. We are living in Panama now. Our children are going to be born in this place. We have to make it here. Not only for James and George. We have to make a good life here for all our children. Too many of our people are dying in this land. We have to make sure that their sacrifice will not be in vain.

AS HE FINISHES THIS SPEECH, THE LIGHTS GO OUT AND THE CURTAIN CLOSES.

(THEY LEAVE THE STAGE TO THE MUSIC OF BOB MARLEY'S "NO WOMAN NO CRY.")

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## EPÍLOGO

EL ESCENARIO CAMBIA A LA CASA DE MANUELITA. ELLA REGRESA DE LA ESCUELA PARA INFORMAR A SUS PADRES DEL ÉXITO QUE TUVO CON SU COMPOSICIÓN. (The scene shifts to Manuelita's home. She has just returned from school and tells her parents of the success she had with her composition.)

**MANUELITA:** ¡Mami! ¡Papi! ¿Adivina que...?!

**MAMÁ (VIOLETA):** ¿Qué pasa, Mamita?

**PAPÁ (JORGE):** ¿A tu maestra no le gustó lo que escribiste?

**MANUELITA:** ¡Ah no! Al contrario. ¡Le gustó mucho!. Es más, quiere escribir una obra de teatro sobre la vida del abuelo Samuel y la abuela Leah para el otro año. Dice que va a venir a hablar con ellos y con ustedes para conseguir más detalles de sus vidas. Yo quiero actuar en esa obra. ¡Quiero el papel de mi abuelita Leah!

**MAMA(VIOLETA):** ¡Qué emoción! Quizás saldrás en la televisión.

**PAPA(JORGE):** Television?!. Es que nuestra hija va directamente pa'Hollywood.

**MAMÁ (VIOLETA):** Tengo algo que tal vez puedas usar...Te lo iba a regalar de todas maneras.

**MANUELITA:** ¿Qué es lo que es?

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**MAMÁ (VIOLETA) (ABRE UNA MALETA Y SACA UN VESTIDO DE NOVIA.)** Te quiero regalar el vestido de novia que usó la abuela Leah cuando se casó con el abuelo Samuel hace casi setenta años. Ella tenía tu tamaño cuando se casó, así que si hacen la obra de teatro, lo puedes usar. Sería auténtico, ¿no te parece?

**MANUELITA:** Ay, qué chevere, Mami. Te quiero mucho. (LE DA MUCHOS BESITOS.)

**MAMÁ(VIOLETA):** Cuando termines con la obra de teatro, lo puedes donar a la Sociedad de Amigos del Museo Afroantillano de Panamá (SAMAAP), para que lo puedan guardar en nuestro Museo.

**PAPÁ (JORGE):** Violeta, tenemos que celebrar. Estoy muy orgulloso de nuestra hija. ¿Que te parece si vamos a cenar en el Restaurante Antillano?

**MAMÁ (VIOLETA):** ¡¡Buena idea, pero no te voy a permitir tomar ni un vaso mas de ese famoso “sea moss and isinglass”!!

**SALEN CONTENTOS DEL ESCENARIO CON LA MÚSICA “WEST INDIAN MAN” DE RUBEN BLADES.**

END/ FIN

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## UNOS MINUTOS CON EL PASADO...

Al leer la obra “De Barbados a Panamá,” y al relacionarla con esta colección de fotografías sacadas de los rincones en que bostezaban, surge una imagen completa de un período significativo de nuestra historia panameña y despierta en mí una apreciación profunda para los héroes con picos, palas, grúas, y dinamita que dividieron en dos el continente para abrir un canal y una nueva ruta através de América.

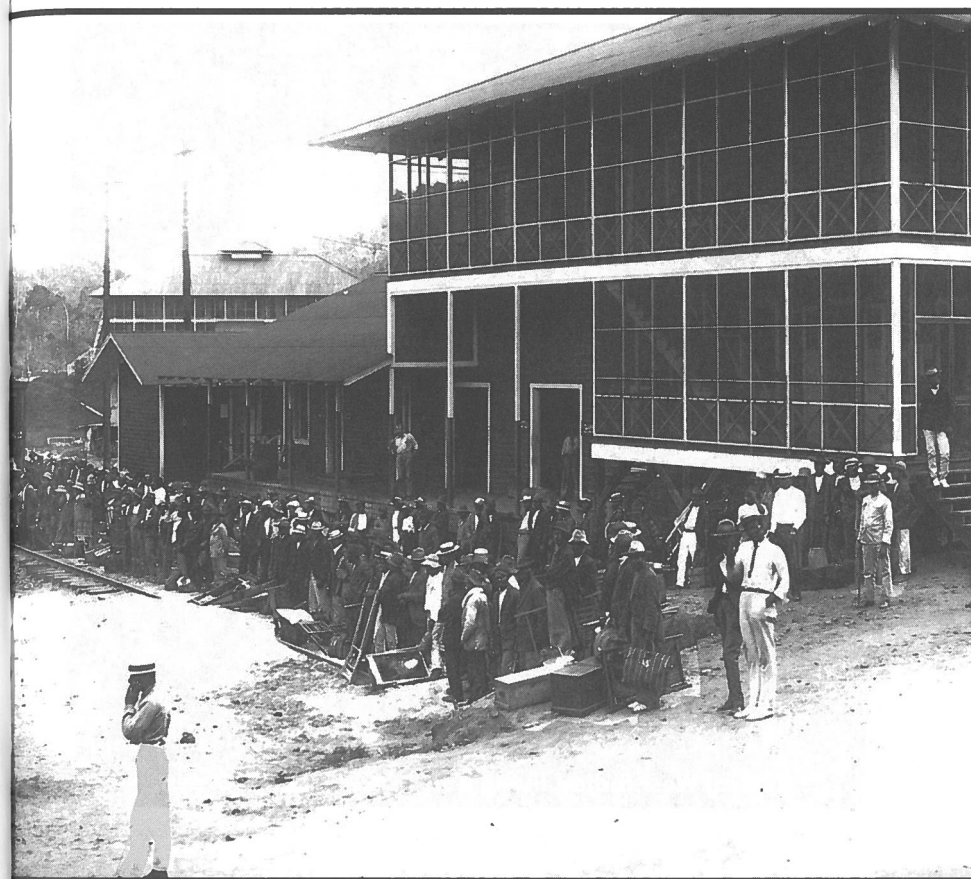
Miles de personas emigraron de las islas del Caribe, y se establecieron en Panamá para participar en la contrucción de la obra de ingeniería más grande de su época. Cuando observo los rostros bajo el poder magnificador de la computadora, veo en las miradas de los protagonistas ojos pioneros llenos de vigor y esperanza.

Aquí hay imágenes de jóvenes sembrando explosivos en el corazón de las montañas agrestes y hostiles, otros haciendo un alto en medio de la jornada agotadora para admirar con orgullo el producto de un día más dentro de la zanja interoceánica, rodeados de gigantescas palas mecánicas que reposan a sus lados como enormes dinosaurios de metal. Pero también demuestran otros aspectos sociales de la vida en esa época: personajes que se visten de gala en sus bodas, con la solemnidad que describe un acervo cultural que refleja el matrimonio de una cultura de profundas raíces africanas y afeites europeos.

Sólo a ellos se puede dedicar con humildad y mucho honor este homenaje gráfico.

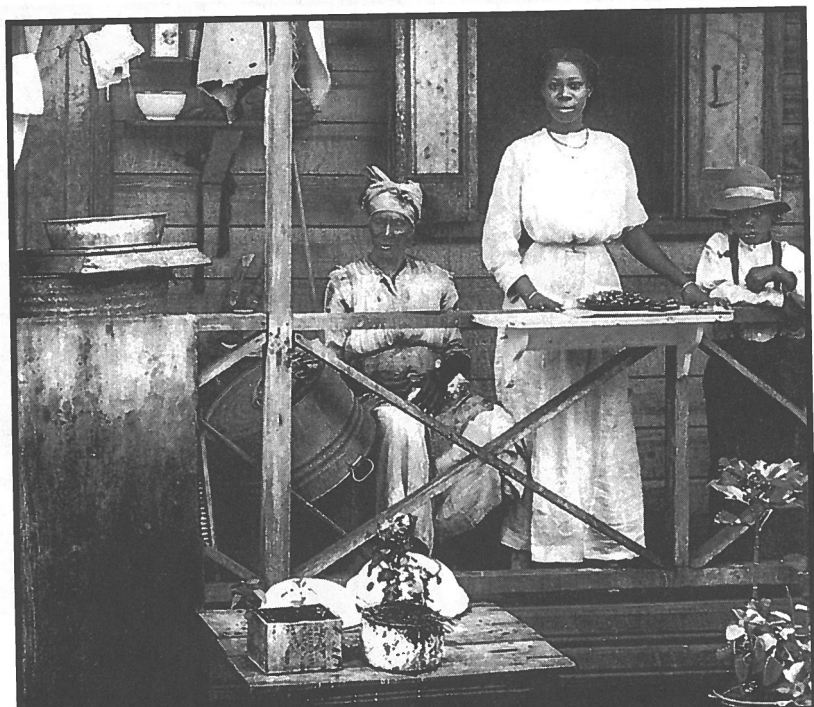
**Gritzko Aparicio**





**Inmigrantes antillanos, recién llegados a Panamá, esperan en fila para que le asignen una habitación.**

**Newly arrived West Indian immigrants wait in line for a housing assignment.**



Vivienda típica de los obreros afroantillanos en Golden Green.  
Typical West Indian living quarters in Golden Green.



**1913: Participantes a una Boda Antillana en NewTown, Culebra.**  
**West Indian wedding scene in New Town, Culebra in 1913.**



Sept. 1906 - Bottle Alley before paving Colon.  
Bottle Alley en septiembre 1906 antes de pavimentar las  
calles de Colón.



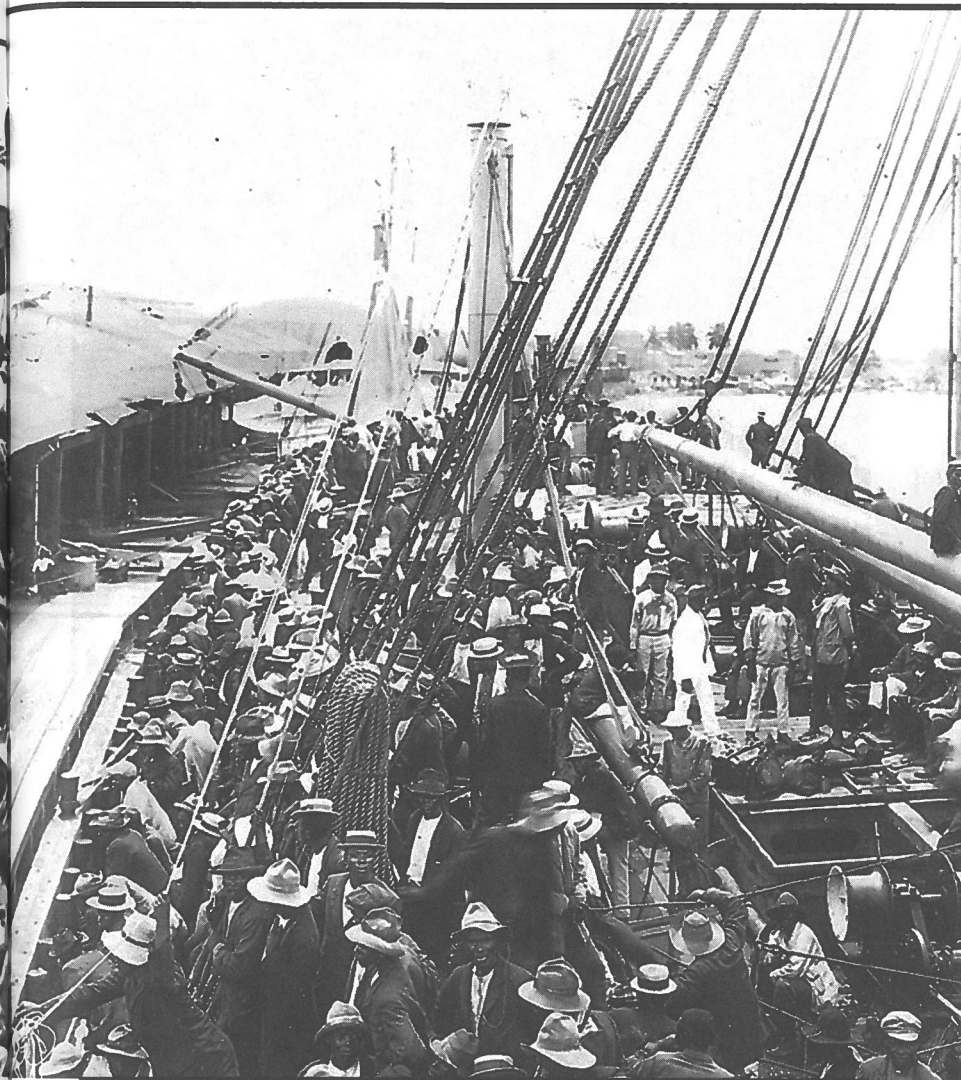
Vagón con obreros alrededor del año 1906.

Typical labor train circa 1906.



Sep. 2 - 1909: Arrival at Cristobal of S.S. Ancon with 1500 laborers from Barbados. Deck Scene.

El 2 de septiembre de 1909, llegaron 1500 obreros de Barbados al Puerto de Cristóbal abordo del S.S. Ancón.



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Images of the West Indian Immigrants aboard the  
S.S. Ancon on September 2, 1909.

Imágenes del inmigrante antillano abordo del S.S. Ancón  
el 2 de septiembre de 1909.



Sep. 2 - 1909: Group of laborers from Barbados on the deck of the SS Ancon.

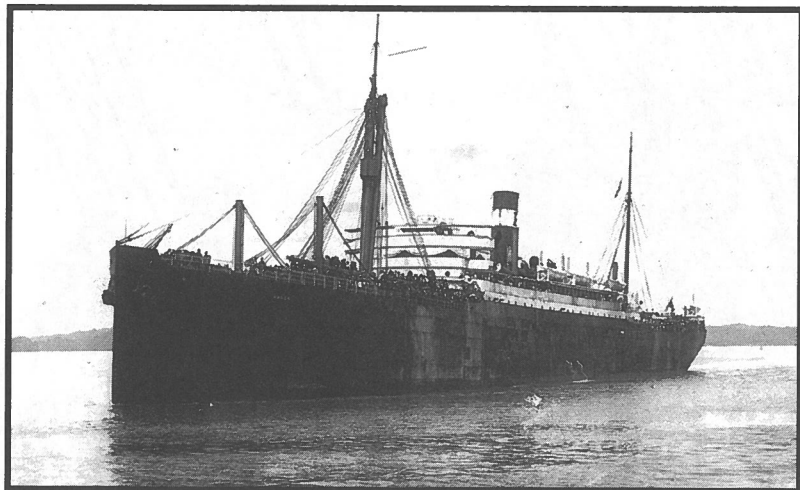
Grupo de obreros de Barbados en el S.S. Ancón el  
2 de septiembre de 1909.



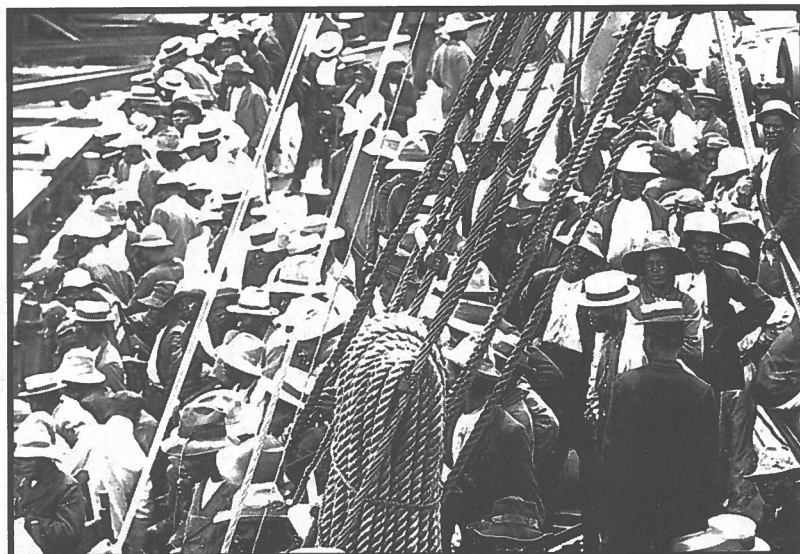
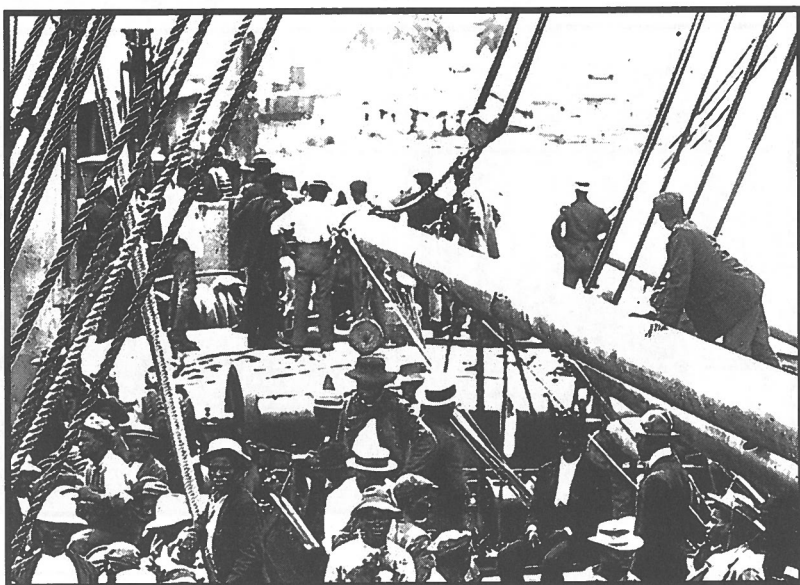


Images of the West Indian immigrants aboard the S.S. Ancon  
on September 2, 1909.

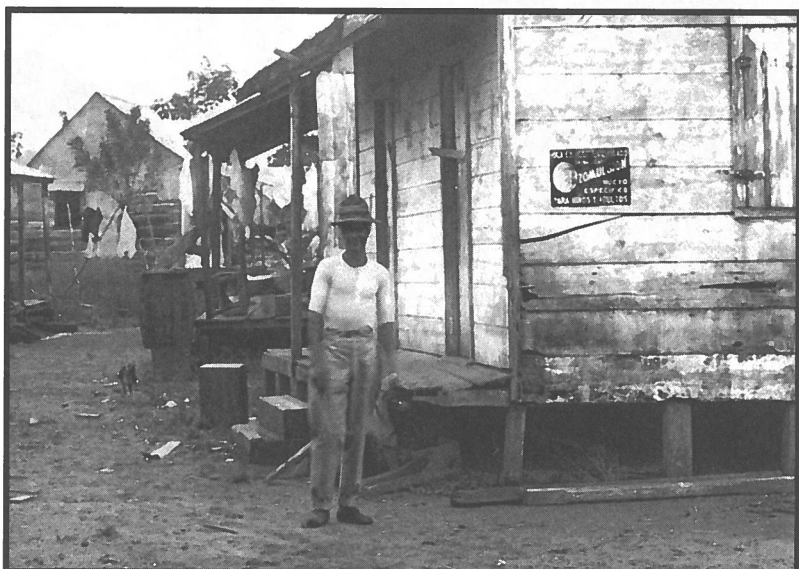
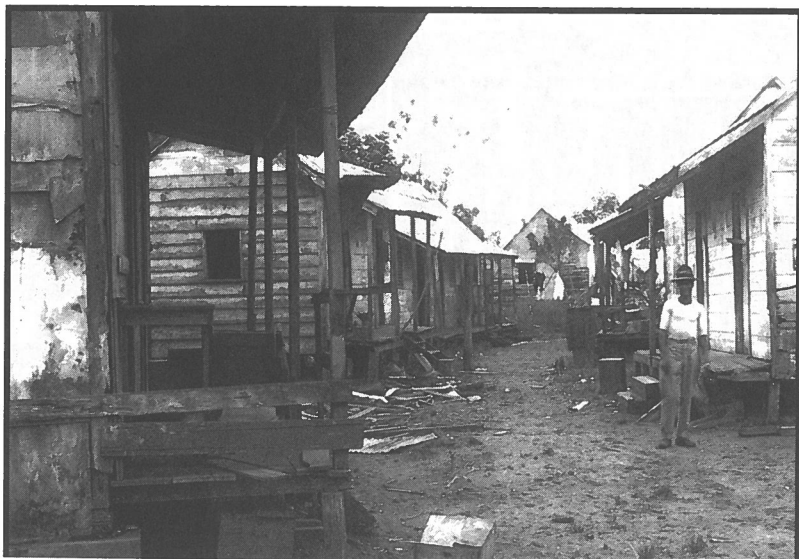
Imágenes de los inmigrantes afroantillanos que llegaron en el  
SS. Ancón el 2 de septiembre de 1909.



**Inmigrantes afroantillanos abordo del S.S. Ancon.**  
**West Indian immigrants aboard the S.S. Ancon.**



Escenas abordo del S.S. Ancón.  
Deck scenes aboard the S.S. Ancon.



**JAN. 1912 BOHIO VILLAGE - Street Scene - 71E**

Escena de una calle en "Bohio Village" en enero de 1912.



Escenas de las viviendas de los obreros afroantillanos.  
Living quarters for black West Indian workers.



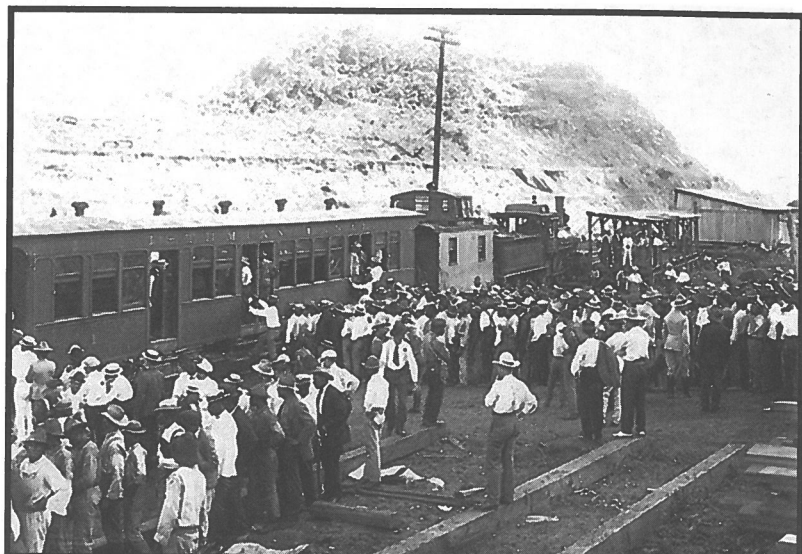
Obreros en fila para comer en Camp Biedr, Cristóbal.





**Comisariato con entradas separadas para personas del gold roll y el silver roll.**

**Commissary with separate entrances for persons on the gold roll and the silver roll.**



**JAN 12, 1908: THE PAY CAR AT CULEBRA**



**Vagón con la planilla en Culebra el 12 de enero de 1908.**

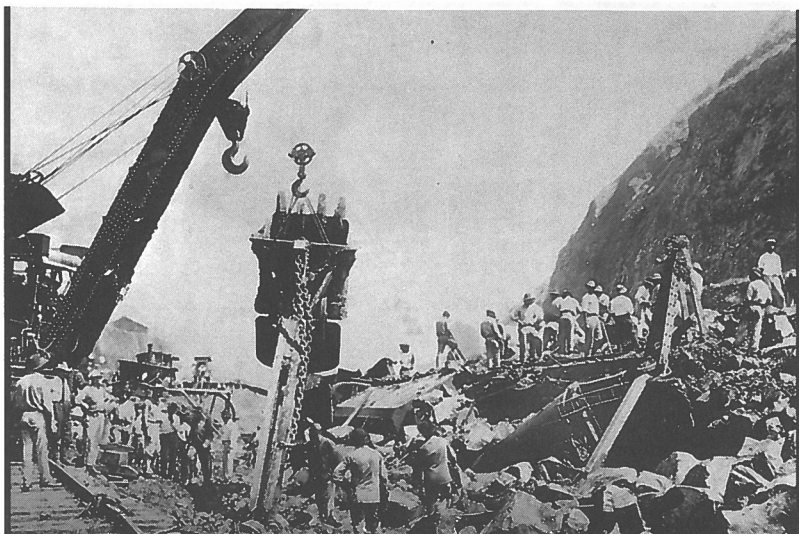




March 13 - 1912: Hand excavation by contract labor



Tipo de trabajo realizado por los obreros antillanos.



**Agosto 17 - 1913: Grúa removiendo Pala en Cerro Oro  
(Corte Culebra).**

**Crane removing a steam shovel at Gold Hill, Culebra Cut.**



**March 1911: Culebra Cut. Steam shovel loading rocks.**

**En marzo de 1911, una pala de vapor saca rocas de  
Corte Culebra.**



**1913: Culebra (New Town). C.Z. Street scene. West Indian wedding party.**



**1913: Boda Antillana en Culebra - New Town**



Loading holes with dynamite to blast moving face of slide.

February 1912

Obreros antillanos colocando dinamita en febrero 1912.



**Fumigating Force in Panamá City.**  
**Cuadrilla de fumigadores en la Ciudad de Panamá.**

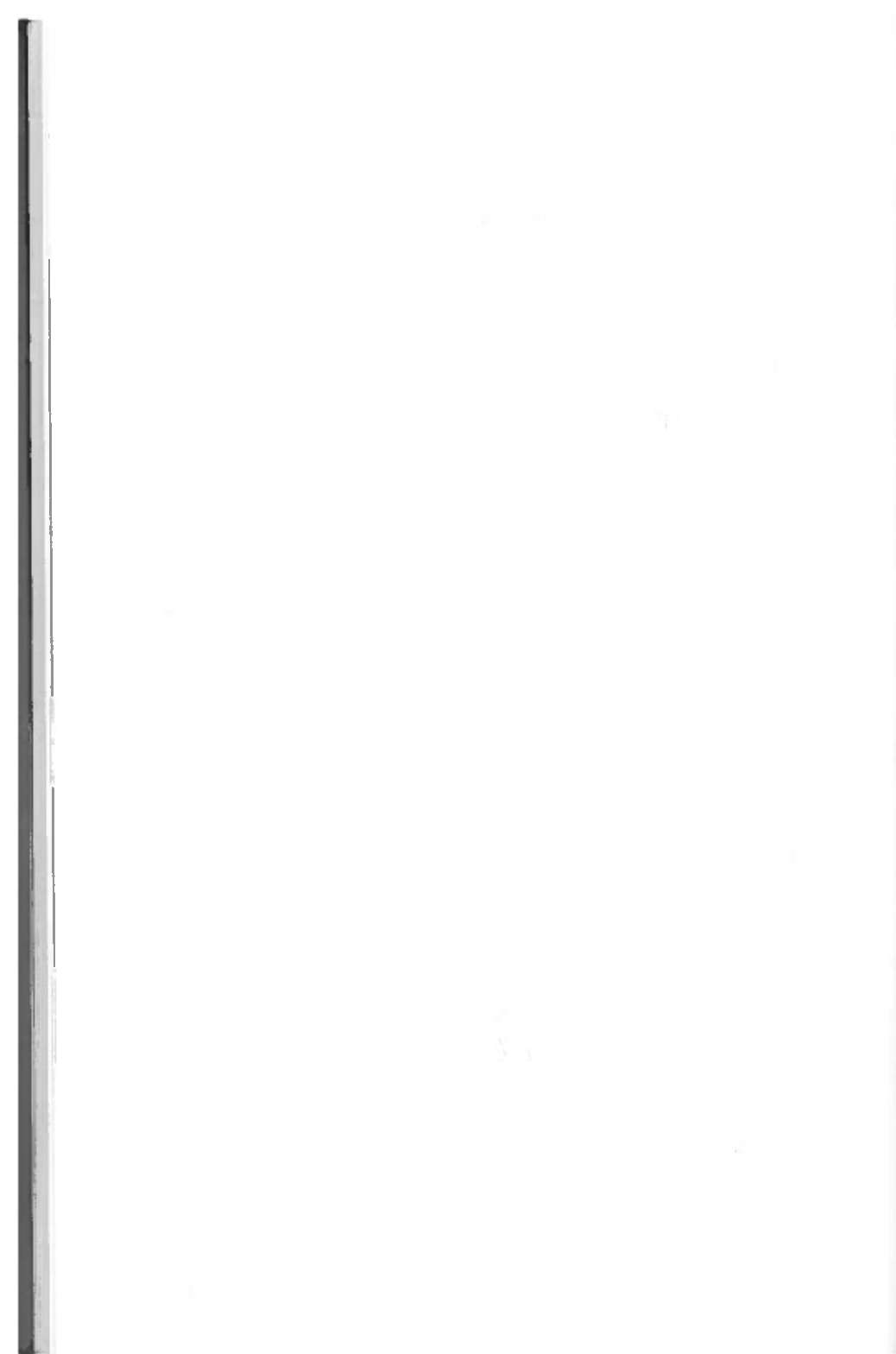


**West Indian worker fumigating the area.**  
**Obrero antillano fumigando el área.**

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**P**ara muchos estudiosos, la construcción del Canal de Panamá marca un momento a partir del cual la historia de Panamá y su gente, da un vuelco y se inicia un período de prosperidad y de transformaciones profundas en todos los ámbitos de su identidad nacional.

En su obra "De Barbados a Panamá," la profesora Melva de Goodin, con gran acierto, descubre una fuente de información, plétórica de incidentes sociales y humanos, que se desarrolla a principios del siglo veinte dentro de la comunidad afroantillana, tanto en la isla caribeña de Barbados como en el Panamá de la construcción del Canal.

Es difícil hacer un análisis exhaustivo que permita evaluar todas las transformaciones provenientes de las Antillas, muchas de ellas de ascendencia africana.

Lo que es innegable es que investigadores y sociólogos tendrán que profundizar en este período como lo ha hecho la Profesora Goodin para poder hacer un estudio objetivo de la sociedad panameña.

Al hacerlo, se develará un panorama lleno de incidentes humanos y heroicos, en donde la otra cara de esta historia nos revelará la riqueza cultural que los inmigrantes antillanos han aportado para la conformación de nuestra identidad.

Gritzko A. Aparicio

1/8/2016

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Recrear los hechos y acontecimientos diarios siempre ha sido parte de la creatividad popular de las culturas africanas. En la obra "De Barbados a Panamá," Melva Lowe de Goodin comparte su orgullo de pertenecer a la etnia afroantillana, una comunidad rica en legados y aportes significativos al desarrollo de Panamá.

Profesor Gerardo Maloney, Sociólogo

Melva Lowe Goodin's "From Barbados to Panama" is proudly bilingual and makes a special contribution to the varied literature emerging from the Republic of Panama.

Professor Adelaida Alphonse Jones



EDITOR

**CEMI**

Calle 7<sup>a</sup> Vista Hermosa, Ed.  
Apartado 0819-04188, El Dorado, P.R.  
Tel.: (507) 261-0559 / (507) 229-2  
Fax: (507) 229-1  
E-Mail: egeminis@cwpr  
www.editorageminis.com

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